

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A catheter, comprising:

a proximal shaft defining a guidewire lumen and an inflation lumen there through, the proximal shaft having a longitudinal cut extending radially from an outer surface of the proximal shaft to the guidewire lumen, wherein the inflation lumen is arcuate shaped;

at least one plank-like support strip entirely embedded within a wall of the proximal shaft and radially disposed between the guidewire lumen and an outer surface of the proximal shaft, wherein the support strip extends proximate the longitudinal cut; and

a guide member slidably encircling ~~coupled to~~ the proximal shaft for providing transverse access to the guidewire lumen via the longitudinal cut.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The catheter of claim 1, further comprising:

a curved reinforcement member disposed adjacent to the inflation lumen such that the reinforcement member is entirely embedded within the wall of the proximal shaft and radially disposed between the inflation lumen and the outer surface of proximal shaft.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The catheter of claim 2, further comprising:

a joint member disposed in the proximal shaft at a circumferential location that is situated between an end of the support strip and an end of the curved reinforcement member wherein the joint member permits bending of the proximal shaft and opening of the longitudinal cut.

Claim 4 (original): The catheter of claim 3, wherein the joint member is constructed of one of a polyolefin.

Claim 5 (original): The catheter of claim 3, wherein the joint member is partially embedded within the wall of the shaft.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The catheter of claim 3, wherein the joint member has a wedge-like cross-section with a curved outer surface that forms a portion of the outer surface of the proximal shaft.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The catheter of claim 3, wherein the joint member has a wedge-like cross-section that is fixed within a corresponding groove in the proximal shaft.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A catheter, comprising:

a shaft portion defining a guidewire lumen and an inflation lumen, the shaft portion having a longitudinal cut extending radially from an outer surface of the shaft portion to the guidewire lumen, wherein said inflation lumen is arcuate shaped;

a pair of plate-like support strips entirely embedded within a wall of the shaft portion, wherein the support strips are radially disposed between the guidewire lumen and the ~~an~~ outer surface of the shaft portion on opposing sides of the longitudinal cut;

a curved reinforcement member entirely embedded within the wall of the shaft portion and radially disposed between the inflation lumen and the outer surface of the shaft portion; and

a pair of joint members each disposed at a different circumferential location about the shaft portion, wherein at least a portion of each joint member is disposed between a respective ~~an~~ end of the curved reinforcement member and one of the pair of support strips, wherein the joint members permit bending of the shaft portion and opening of the longitudinal cut.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The catheter of claim 8, further comprising:

a guide member slidably encircling ~~coupled to~~ the shaft portion for providing transverse access to the guidewire lumen via the longitudinal cut.

Claim 10 (original): The catheter of claim 8, wherein the joint members are selected from the group consisting of a polyolefin, and a polyolefin copolymer.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The catheter of claim 8, wherein at least one of the pair of support strips and the reinforcing member is selected from the group consisting of stainless steel, titanium, tungsten, and Nitinol.

Claim 12 (original): The catheter of claim 8, wherein at least one of the pair of support strips and the reinforcing member is a high modulus polymer.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The catheter of claim 8, wherein each of the pair of support strips and the reinforcing member is made of metal.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The catheter of claim 8, wherein each of the pair of joint members has a wedge-like cross-section with a curved outer surface that forms a portion of the outer surface of the shaft portion.